

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE-CULTURE CRISIS IN TURN OF THE CENTURY GERMANY

By Aaron Jaffe

The modern crises of language in German literature is represented early on in the century in fiction by Georg Büchner's play "Woyzeck" and in treatise form by Nietzsche's *On Truth and Lying* and Hugo von Hofmannstahl's *Chandos Letter*. In Büchner's

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play the simple-minded main character, Woyzeck, always seems to be expressing himself out of joint with those

around him. He is mostly quiet with his boss the Captain, engages in Beckett-like confused and vaguely disturbing conversation with Andres, and makes next to no sense when talking to Marie. Woyzeck's language only loosely relates to any meaning he may be trying to impart. When scared his fear is evident, but not because of any clear use of language; it is evident from his deluded non-communicative babble. If one was to see the work performed on stage the actor playing Woyzeck would have the freedom to remain unconstrained by Büchner's text. We can never tell what kind of man Woyzeck is because his speech is a poor reflection of his reality. In *Woyzeck* Büchner shows his

